



THE MOMENT RAMA IS EXILED

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ABSTRACT

The Indian epic, the Ramayana is a beautiful yet complex tangle of different characters that are woven in the broader story. Different expressions are used to describe the personality and beauty of women, behind this beauty lays a more dark and twisted truth. An analysis of the role of a man as a son, husband, is done and it concludes with a brief analysis of the role of men in society. In the epic the Ramayana the respective heroine Sita is the feminist icons though different in her circumstances and character. Despite laws being in place women continue to be subjected to violence, exploitation, harassment and subjugation in a patriarchal society. There has not been much evaluation from the age of this epic to present day society.

KEYWORDS: Mythology, Oppression, Gender and resistance, Victimization.

INTRODUCTION

India is a land of cultural pride and its social fabric has been integrated with morals, ideals and ethics. Our social practices, festivals and rituals, have highlighted the value of righteousness, community love and the right code of conduct. We celebrate one of the most auspicious festivals known as Ram Navami. It is celebrated to mark the birth of Lord Rama in Ayodhya to queen Kaushalya and king Dasharath. Lord Rama is renowned for his virtue of righteousness and ethical behaviour. The entire life saga of Lord Rama has been written in the great epic Ramayana by Valmiki. The narrative of the Rama-katha might have been the original story of Rama has many more variants. The variants suggests some consciousness of a historical process. Ramayana has several examples of dealing with the complexity of ethics and justice.

Rama is the hero of the Ramayana epic, an incarnation of the God Vishnu. The eldest and favourite son of Dasaratha, King of Ayodhya, he is a virtuous prince and is much loved by the people. He is exiled from Ayodhya due to the plotting of his stepmother, Kaikeyi.

Sita is Rama's wife and daughter of King Janaka of Mithila. Sita is the epitome of womanly purity and virtue.

Lakshmana (seen here) is Rama's younger brother. Completely loyal to Rama, he chooses to go with Rama and Sita when they are exiled from Ayodhya.

Ravana is the king of Lanka and has 10 heads and 20 arms. He received a boon from the God Brahma that he cannot be killed by gods, demons or by spirits, after performing a severe penance for 10,000 years. After receiving his reward from Brahma, Ravana began to lay waste to the earth and disturbed the deeds of the good Hindu sages. Vishnu incarnates as the human Rama to defeat him, assisted by an army of monkeys and bears, thus circumventing the boon given by Brahma.

Dasaratha is the King of Ayodhya, Rama's father.

Kausalya is Rama's mother, Dasaratha's chief wife.

Kaikeyi is Dasaratha's wife and Rama's stepmother. She demands that Rama be banished to the forest and that her son Bharata be awarded the kingdom instead.

Bharata is the second son of Dasaratha. When he learns that his mother Kaikeyi had forced Rama into exile, causing Dasaratha to die broken hearted, he storms out of the palace and goes in search of Rama. When Rama refuses to return from his exile to assume the throne, Bharata obtains Rama's sandals and places them on the throne as a gesture that Rama is the true king.

Sumitra is Dasaratha's wife and mother of the twins Lakshmana and Satrugna.

Hanuman is the wise and resourceful monkey who helps Rama in his quest to defeat Ravana and rescue Sita.

Sugriva is the ruler of the monkey kingdom. His throne was taken by his brother Bali, but Rama helps him to defeat the usurper in return for his assistance in finding Sita.

The moment of Rama's Exile, as he departed, throngs of people followed him

weeping and wailing and cursing Kaikeyi. They begged Rama again and again to return. But Rama, the steadfast in dharma, did not turn his chariot. Seeing the people old and elders, learned Brahmins and others, Rama came down from the chariot and walked on foot with Sita and Lakshmana.

They reached the banks of river Tamasa at evening and spend the night there. To save the citizens the hardship of travel and forest life, Rama ordered the chariot to be yoked while his subjects lay just asleep. At early morning the people found themselves without Rama. They looked here and there and everywhere but without any clue as to Rama's whereabouts. Ultimately they returned to Ayodhya dejected and cursing their sleep.

Immediately Bharata raved and cursed his mother that she has destroyed the family. She has sinned greatly against Rama and him. She is really a demon in a guise of a woman. He continued crying out and wailing for a long time and resolved not to accept the crown, and swore to bring Rama back.

Eager and anxious to meet Rama, Bharata began to climb up the hill with quick steps and was soon before Rama's hut. He saw Rama's face shining like the full moon framed in the doorway of the hut. Crying piteously, his face full of perspiration, Bharata fell down before he could reach Rama. Raising him up, Rama embraced him warmly. Seeing Bharata with matted locks and in tree-bark like a hermit surprised Rama. Bharata had grown weak, thin and pale because of grief. Rama could recognize Bharata with difficulty and ask for the entire family.

Having heard Rama speak thus, Bharata broke down and said to return Raghava to Ayodhya and ascend the throne.

Rama, Sita and Lakshmana were downed in the ocean of sorrow to hear of Dasaratha's death, and profuse tears rolled down their cheeks. Somehow they took heart on being solaced by others. Bharata again pleaded Rama to return to Ayodhya, but Rama refused to oblige Bharata saying, he must remain in the forest for fourteen years at command. It is the utmost duty to follow dharma.

Rama's firm resolve to remain in the forest made Bharata to return to Ayodhya. He took Rama's sandals, out them on the throne and began to rule the kingdom on behalf of Rama till he reassured from the exile. Bharata retired to the nearby village Nandigrama, and lived there like an ascetic clad in bark and matted locks. From there he ruled in Rama's name.

Meanwhile Rama left Chitrakuta and entered the Dhandaka forest, and then reached rishi Atri's hermitage and received his blessings.

Here we are giving you a glimpse of little ethical learning from the exile of Rama: The whole Ramayana is evidence of pure love for If Rama didn't love and respect his father he would have escaped the sufferings of 14 years exile by just disrespecting the words of his father. Rama chose the affection and respect of his father over his comforts and luxuries.

On the other hand, his wife Sita and brother Lakshmana have also shown exemplary family bonding by not leaving Rama's side and accompanying him in the entire 14 years of exile. Ramayana is an incredible story of winning of truth, justice and ethics over the evil in society. It is a great source of inspiration and guidance for our little ones. We must let our younger ones imbibe the morals and ethics from their cultural roots, and Ramayana is the ultimate source for it.

We all uphold certain moral values in life. Although we belong to different countries, states and regions, represent diverse cultures and religions, fundamentally we believe in many principles of life that are very similar in nature; like, brotherhood, kindness, sincerity, honesty and integrity etc. And if we look back, these values, deeply rooted within us, were sowed when we were children. And the values we cherish the most were taught through stories. Yes, although it sounds impossible, it is true that values embedded concretely within us are strongly connected to some of our favourite characters who had upheld similar ideals through the toughest of times in their lives. Without even realizing how much those characters had impacted our thoughts, we carried them ahead in life. And at some point of time, when certain situations similar to the ones in the stories, appeared in our lives, we unconsciously sought strength from those characters.

But the values and principles that I uphold in life, come from our own great Indian Epics.

We have a whole world of Epics like the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. And I think, they are worth studying, reading and sharing simply because they are a magnificent window to the views, philosophies and beliefs of the past, of past cultures, traditions and our strong value system.

The Ramayana is not just an epic or a tale, but also an educational medium to demonstrate the importance of values such as loving and respecting our family, keeping our promises, protecting the weak and so on. By using the Magnum Opus of Hindu mythology, the Ramayana as a medium, we can teach our children many life-skills and ethics.

The Ramayana is one of the greatest epics of Hindu Mythology. Written by the Hindu sage Valmiki, the Ramayana is not just a story, but also an educational medium used by the ancient sages to promote the importance of doing your dharma (duty) in relationships. The Ramayana depicts characters that we should aspire to be like, such as the ideal father, ideal son, ideal brother, ideal leader, ideal wife, etc.

Important values and ethics can be taught to children by way of storytelling. The Ramayana and Mahabharata especially, preach a lot of values that we would want our children to imbibe. Not for nothing, are they the most commonly taught epics since ancient times.

Instead of simply telling children to respect elders, examples from these epics would teach them the same with more emphasis.

Now, parents, teachers and care givers can use one of the greatest gems of Hindu Mythology, namely the Ramayana, to promote some of the most important moral values of life in children.

Differentiating between Good and Evil

Children can be inspired to choose right over wrong, even when wrong may feel more appropriate by giving them the example of Bharat, who was awarded the honour of ruling the mighty kingdom of Ayodhya. Bharat could have just ruled by becoming the king and thereby enjoying the absolute power and luxury that came with it, but his sense of justice would not permit him to do what most others would greedily do. Instead, upon learning that his mother Kaikeyi had unjustly managed to get Rama banished from Ayodhya, he immediately went into the forest to look for Rama and offer him his rightful position as the ruler of Ayodhya. So great was his devotion to his brother, and so strong was his desire to be fair and just, that when Rama refused to return to Ayodhya before completing his 14 years in exile, Bharat placed Rama's footwear on the throne and ruled Ayodhya in the name of Rama – as Rama's emissary until he returned to regain his rightful position.

This teaches our children that even if something is extremely desirable, it should only be accepted if attained in a right manner, without hurting or affecting anyone else in an unfair and unjust way.

Defending the Weak

The Ramayana is the katha-narration of man, not a god. Sometimes Rama's divinity is reflected. While providing emancipation to Jatayu, Rama says: "maya tvam samanujnato gaccha lokananuttaman".

Jatayu was my favourite character in the story. And I had spent many hours preening into the blue skies to find him when I was a child. Now, Jatayu, an aged demigod in the form of a vulture, had witnessed Ravana kidnapping Sita and taking her forcefully to Lanka. Paying no attention to his old age, Jatayu tried to save Sita by fighting Ravana valiantly, but failed miserably. Unfortunately, he also got fatally wounded in the massive fight. When Rama and Lakshmana were looking for Sita, they came across Jatayu where he was lying, breathing his last. Jatayu informed Rama about Sita's whereabouts and Ravana's plans before breathing his last. Moved to tears by the courage and valour of the aged Jatayu, Rama performed the last rites as though Jatayu was his father.

This teaches our child that they must always stand up for the weak. The fact that Jatayu was so old and still tried to take on the powerful Ravana single-handedly,

teaches our children to be courageous and be unafraid to take on any challenge that comes along the way, and accomplish it to the best of ability.

Lord Rama and Mata Sita exemplify the essence of mutual respect in a marriage. Their relationship was built on a deep reverence for each other's virtues, qualities, and individuality. Lord Rama highly regarded Mata Sita and valued her opinions and decisions. Similarly, Mata Sita deeply respected Lord Rama's wisdom and unwavering commitment to righteousness. This mutual respect created a strong foundation of trust and understanding.

Lord Rama and Mata Sita fulfilled their responsibilities toward each other and their family with utmost sincerity. Lord Rama's commitment to his duty as a husband and a king is an embodiment of honour and integrity. Similarly, Mata Sita's unwavering dedication as a devoted wife and mother showcases the importance of fulfilling familial responsibilities with devotion and care.

By imbibing the values displayed by Lord Rama and Mata Sita, newly married couples can strive to create a loving and harmonious relationship. Their story teaches the importance of love, devotion, mutual respect, sacrifice, responsibility, and loyalty laying a strong foundation for a blissful married life. Embracing these virtues can lead to a deeper connection, understanding, and enduring happiness in the journey of marriage.

Ramayana serves as a timeless reservoir of wisdom, guiding individuals toward a virtuous and benevolent way of life. Its teachings continue to resonate in contemporary times, offering valuable insights into navigating the complexities of existence.

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